August 7, 2024 • Toxic Exposures

BIG FOOD NEWS WATCH

Chemical Used in Rocket Fuel Is Widespread in Food, Consumer Reports Finds + More

The Defender's Big Food NewsWatch brings you the latest headlines related to industrial food companies and their products, including ultra-processed foods, food additives, contaminants, GMOs and lab-grown meat and their toxic effects on human health. The views expressed in the excerpts from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender.

By The Defender Staff

AUGUST 7, 2024

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Chemical Used in Rocket Fuel Is Widespread in Food, Consumer Reports Finds

CBS News reported:

> A chemical used in rocket fuel and fireworks is also found in an array of food products, particularly those popular with babies and children, according to findings released Wednesday by Consumer Reports.
>
> The tests by the advocacy group come decades after the chemical, called perchlorate, was first identified as a contaminant in food and water. The Environmental Working Group in 2003 found perchlorate in nearly 20% of supermarket lettuce tested.
>
> Linked to potential brain damage in fetuses and newborns and thyroid troubles in adults, perchlorate was detected in measurable levels of 67% of 196 samples of 63 grocery and 10 fast-food products, the most recent tests by Consumer Reports found. The levels detected ranged from just over two parts per billion (ppb) to 79 ppb.
>
> Foods often consumed by children had the highest levels of perchlorate, averaging 19.4 ppb, while fresh fruit and vegetables as well as fast food also contained elevated amounts.
>
> In reviewing packaging types, foods in plastic containers had the highest levels, averaging nearly 55 ppb, followed by foods in plastic wrap and paperboard, Consumer Reports said.

EPA Issues Emergency Ban of Weedkiller Dacthal, Citing Risks to Unborn Children

CNN Health reported:

> The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued an emergency suspension of the common weedkiller DCPA, also known as Dacthal, it said Tuesday, the first time the agency has used its emergency suspension authority in 40 years. The last emergency ban of this kind was of the pesticide ethylene dibromide, or EDB, in 1983.
>
> Dacthal is used to control weeds in agricultural and non-agricultural settings, the EPA says. It's commonly applied to grasses, artificial turf, crops including strawberries, cotton and field beans and vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and onions.
>
> The agency cited "serious risks" to unborn babies of pregnant women who are exposed to the chemical including living in or around areas where Dacthal has been used. Some pregnant people who handle DCPA products could be exposed to levels that are four to 20 times higher than what the EPA considers safe for unborn babies.
>
> Exposure can alter fetal thyroid hormone levels, a change linked to low birth weight, impaired brain development, decreased IQ and impaired motor skills later in life, according to the EPA.

Olympics Under Pressure to Dump Coca-Cola Sponsorship After Nearly 100 Years Over Health and Environmental Concerns

Fortune reported:

> Coca-Cola has sponsored the Olympic Games since 1928. Last year the company had more sports sponsorships than any other brand, including sportswear companies such as Nike.
>
> Two health experts on Wednesday urged Olympic organizers to cut ties with Coca-Cola, saying the big money sponsorship deal allows the U.S. company to "sportswash" unhealthy sugary drinks.

Born Without Arms or Legs: The Young Man Who Symbolizes How America Neglects Its Most Vulnerable Farmhands

EL PAÍS reported:

> Carlos Candelario was born on December 17, 2004, without arms or legs. He spent years trying to understand why this happened to him. He read about his story and that of others. And, after seeing the impact his case had in the United States, he found the answer: pesticides. His mother, Francisca Herrera, had been exposed to a cocktail of dangerous chemicals while working in tomato fields for Ag-Mart Produce in Florida and North Carolina. Unbeknownst to her, she was in the first trimester of her pregnancy at the time, when Carlos' brain, spinal cord, heart and limbs were forming. With the help of a lawyer, the family eventually sued the company.
>
> Dr. John Reigart, a pediatrician, was consulted as an expert in this case. In his meetings with Francisca Herrera, he told her that workers at Ag-Mart farms were sprayed with chemicals almost every day and that those who felt ill weren't taken to the doctor. Instead, they were asked by their bosses to sit down for a while, drink water and return to work. "Clearly, they were all heavily exposed to pesticides and received no medical care in the field," Reigart explained, in an interview with Univision via Zoom.
>
> According to Candelario's attorney, Andy Yaffa, the company was found to have used 18 pesticides on its crops, six of which were toxins known to cause birth defects. He says rules and regulations for their use were not followed. "There was a long list of negligent acts committed by Ag-Mart with regard to Carlitos," he explains.

German Chemical Giant Bayer Posts Unexpected Loss

AFP News via Barron's reported:

> German chemicals giant Bayer, long weighed down by woes related to its glyphosate-based weedkillers, reported an unexpected second-quarter loss Tuesday driven by a poor performance in its agrochemicals division.
>
> The loss of 34 million euros puts the German giant back in the red after two profitable quarters. Sales in Bayer's agricultural business increased by 1.1 percent, mainly due to higher sales of glyphosate-based herbicides, especially in North America. But the division registered a loss of 229 million euros due to what group CEO Bill Anderson described as a "challenging agricultural market environment".
>
> Bayer has been dogged in recent years by massive litigation issues linked to the Roundup weedkiller, a problem it inherited in the 2018 takeover of U.S. firm Monsanto.
>
> The group has faced a wave of lawsuits in the United States over claims Roundup, which contains the active ingredient glyphosate, causes cancer. Bayer denies the claim but has spent billions of euros on legal costs.

USDA Confirms More H5N1 in Dairy Cows, Wild Birds, and Small Mammals

CIDRAP reported:

> The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed three more HSN1 avian influenza outbreaks in dairy cattle, raising the national total to 181 from 13 states.
>
> The latest confirmations are from Colorado, South Dakota, and Texas.
>
> In other updates, APHIS also reported more detections in wild birds in mammals. The group reported more than 100 HSN1 detections in wild birds across several states. Some were waterfowl taken by hunters and were sampled last fall. However, several were agency-harvested birds from Colorado's Weld County, which has been a recent hot spot for dairy cow outbreaks, poultry outbreaks, and human illnesses. Species in Weld County that tested positive included doves, sparrows, starlings, and pigeons.

Coffee–Dementia Link Continues to Unfurl — Two Studies Hint at Protective Relationships for Some Coffee and Tea Drinkers

MedPage Today reported:

> Coffee and tea intake were associated with long-term cognitive changes in older adults, two prospective studies presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC) suggested.
>
> Among 6,001 Health and Retirement Study participants in the U.S., drinking two or more cups of coffee a day was associated with a 28% lower risk of dementia over 7 years compared with drinking less than one daily cup (P=0.05), reported Changcheng Yuan, ScD, of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston and the Zhejiang University School of Medicine in China, in a poster presented at the meeting.
>
> Moderate tea drinking — up to two cups a day — was also associated with a lower dementia risk compared with no-tea consumption (P=0.05).
>
> When total caffeine intake derived from coffee and tea was calculated, participants in the highest quartile of caffeine consumption had a 38% decreased risk of dementia (P=0.032), Yuan and co-authors said.

Cheese Recall Update by FDA as Products Placed at Highest Risk Level

Newsweek reported:

> A recalled cheese product has been given the highest risk classification by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
>
> Kentucky-based Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese has recalled a batch of its St. Jerome cheese as it may contain Listeria monocytogenes, a bacterium that sometimes can cause serious food poisoning in some people. The issue was picked up by the Kentucky Department of Public Health during routine testing.
>
> The product has now been designated as a Class I recall, the most serious risk level, which is issued when there is a "reasonable probability" that the use of, or exposure to, a product could "cause serious adverse health consequences or death."

Herbicide-Tolerant Basmati Rice Launched in India

GM Watch reported:

> Lovers of basmati rice — known as the Queen of Rice for its unrivaled taste and texture — will be dismayed to learn that the Pusa Institute of New Delhi, India is selling seed of random mutagenesis-bred herbicide-tolerant versions of basmati called RobiNOweed.
>
> The rice, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), is tolerant to the herbicide imazethapyr. It is being touted as non-GMO — which is not universally true as the EU defines random mutagenesis breeding as a GM technique, albeit one that is outside the scope of the GMO regulations due to its long history of use.
>
> However, the direct seeding method favors the emergence of weeds. So the rice has to be sprayed with liberal applications of the herbicide imazethapyr. This chemical is known to damage the DNA of tree frog tadpoles and to act synergistically with glyphosate-based herbicides to damage the DNA of toads.
>
> Imazethapyr was banned in the EU in 2002. The European Chemicals Agency says, "this substance is very toxic to aquatic life with long-lasting effects... and causes serious eye damage." Given these facts, it is not environmentally friendly.
>
> The environmentalist Aruna Rodrigues, who has led the public interest litigation in the Supreme Court of India against the release of GMOs in the country, has written a detailed letter to ICAR demanding that they withdraw the mutagenized herbicide-tolerant rice varieties.

The Defender Staff
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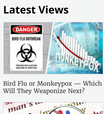

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